

Book Reviews

R. HARRÉ (editor), *Problems of scientific revolution. Progress and obstacles to progress in the sciences*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. vii, 104, £1.75.

The six essays in this book represent the Herbert Spencer Lectures for 1973, and their main theme is one that was central to Spencer's thought, and in keeping with his political and moral convictions. It is the growth of scientific knowledge, and philosophical discussions of the notion of progress.

Sir Hermann Bondi argues that the concept of progress in science is not a simple one and that a direction is not discernible. Moreover, we do not necessarily feel more comfortable about the extent of our present-day knowledge. J. L. Monod discusses with great skill the molecular theory of evolution, that is, the present state of evolution. Professor W. F. Bodmer believes it does not follow that biomedical advances are all for the good of mankind, because they nearly always induce tensions and conflicts; it is up to us to make sure they are advantageous. Dr. J. R. Ravetz finds no absolute internal measure for science's progress, and suggests that to engage in the evolution of science itself, rather than in cumulative progress within the sciences, is preferable, employing objects of inquiry, methods of research, and functions of achieved results. A great improvement in our understanding of human behaviour in order to avoid destruction is seen to be essential by B. F. Skinner, the founder of radical behaviourism. This is to be sought not in individuals, but in the world in which they live, especially cultures. Finally Sir Karl Popper discusses progress in science, and some of the social obstacles to progress, particularly the ideological ones.

Each essay is a masterly contribution to a vitally important subject, and of consequence to the medical sciences as well as to science in general. It should be read by all those seriously involved with the history of medicine or science.

ARTHUR J. TAYLOR (editor), *The standard of living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution*, London, Methuen, 1975, 8vo, pp. lv, 216, £5.40 (£2.90 paperback).

This topic has generated more controversy than any other in British economic history, and Professor Taylor's book is, therefore, an important addition to the publisher's series, *Debates in economic history*. It is composed of a lengthy editorial introduction, followed by seven essays by outstanding economic historians, all of which have appeared in print already: Gilroy (1936), Tucker (1936), Ashton (1949), Hobsbawm (1957), Hartwell (1961), E. P. Thompson (1936), R. S. Neale (1966). In two final contributions, Professor Hobsbawm and Dr. Hartwell, whose essays are central to the discussion, summarize their views on the progress of the debate since their papers were published.

It is most valuable and convenient to have these seminal papers collected together. From the point of view of medical history there is much pertinent material here. The state of nutrition as related to the workers' ability or inability to purchase various foods is of central importance, and further research into several aspects of the problem is still necessary, with the emphasis on the medical factors. Clothing, housing, child labour, alcoholism, etc., present equally fascinating topics for similar studies at the borderline between economics and medicine. This book should, therefore, be examined carefully by those investigating the social aspects of medicine in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain.